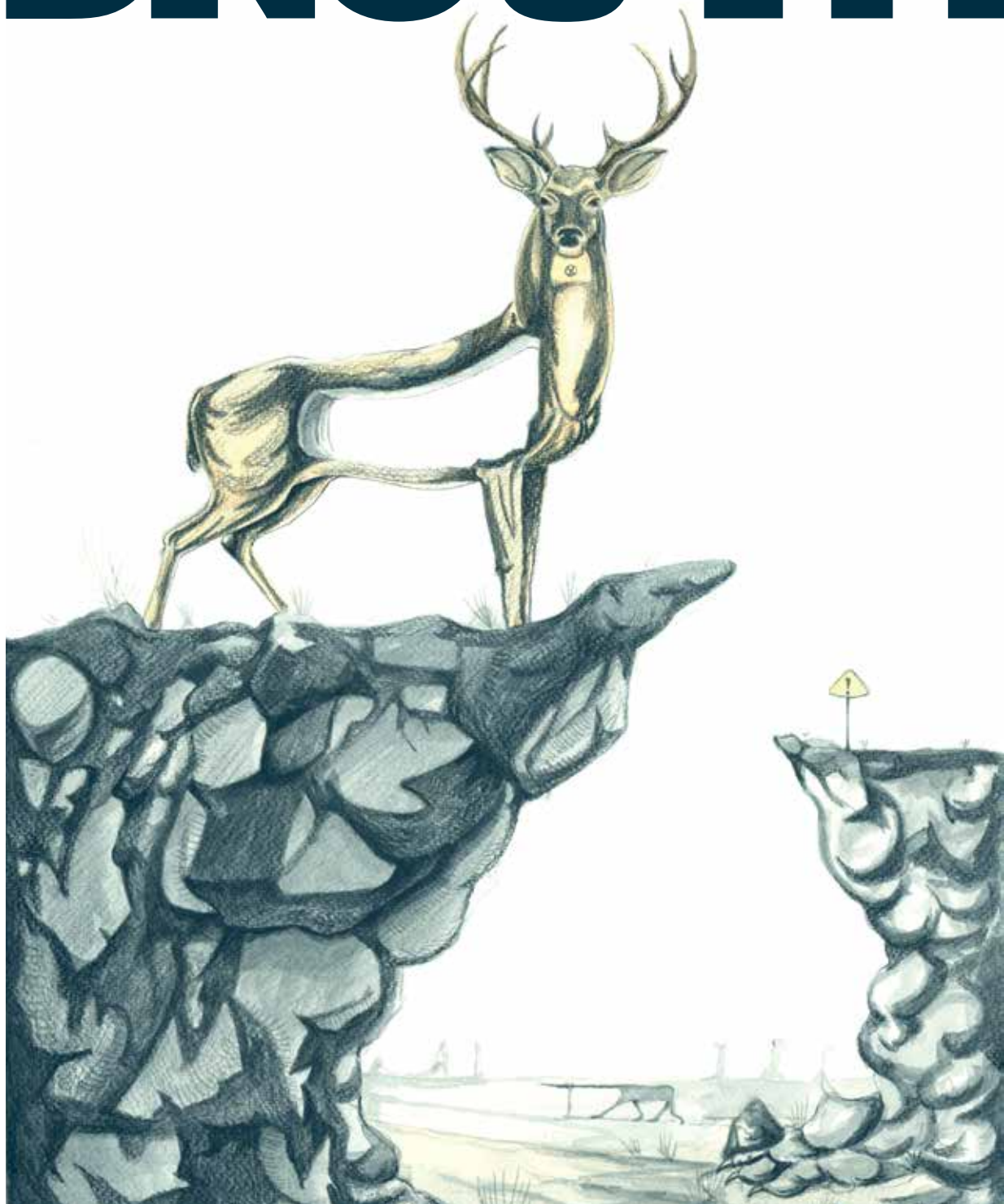




THE DROUTH



POLITICAL ANIMAL



**POLITICAL ANIMAL
THE DROUTH
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2018**

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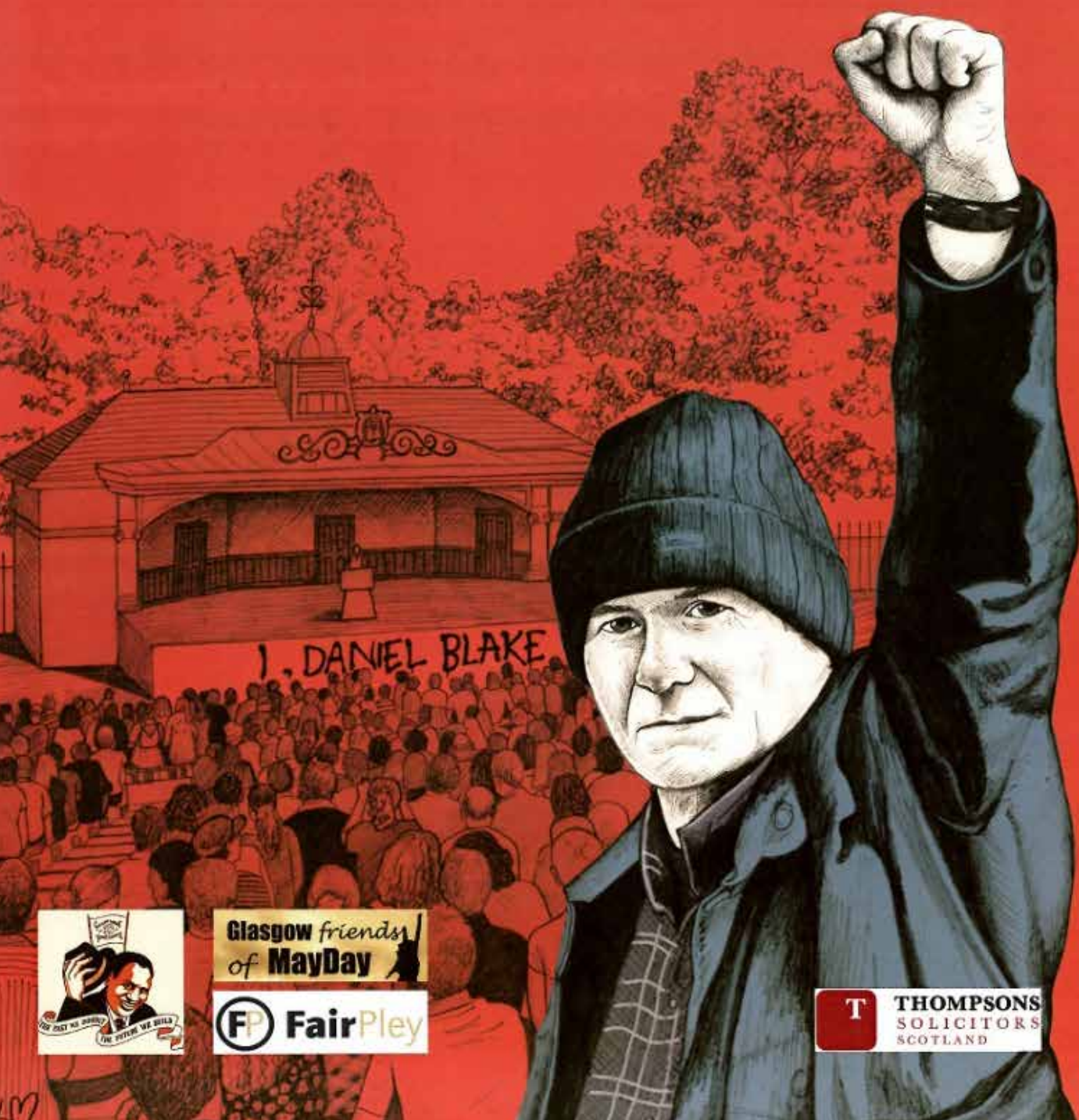
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Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri
DIPARTIMENTO DELLA GIOVENTÙ E DEL SERVIZIO CIVILE NAZIONALE

MAY DAY

CELEBRATION PROGRAMME 2017



David Archibald

Loach and acting: seven fragments.

One. A Glasgow Hotel, spring, 2011.

Ken, given that you're coming to Glasgow to shoot *The Angels' Share* (Loach, 2012), is there any chance that you'd let me sort of look over your shoulder and see how you actually make films? There's been considerable discussion about your working methods, but they've never been written about in any detail. It would be a long-term project because I've got a few other things on my plate. But at the end of the process I'd hope to write a book or at least a few articles about your working practices.

What's in it for us, David? says producer, Rebecca O'Brien.

Nothing but the historical record.

We'll be in touch.

One hour later, a message on my mobile phone: David, Ken here. Can you make a meeting at 10am tomorrow? We're discussing locations. Oh, and I'm doing a live BBC radio broadcast at the Pearce Institute in Govan at 6pm tonight. There's an opportunity to make an intervention from the floor so if you know any activists who are available tell them to come along. It would be good to get their voices in too.

Two: The British Film Institute Loach Archive, summer 2016.

Extracts of a letter from the writer Trevor Griffiths to Ken Loach during the pre-production of *Fatherland* (Loach, 1986). Dated, 30 January 1985

Most of the time ... I'm in a total fug about your intentions and remain wholly unable to make out how you propose to direct the piece.

Ken, let's stop fucking around and say what each of us feels this film needs.

Like *Country* (Eyre, BBC, 1981) ... it's written to be acted, calls for performative skills to organize meaning within a dense, elliptical, imagistic text ... it demands investigation and interrogation by the director and actors, who will otherwise not know what they are doing and simply wing it.

It is impossible to 'tell' *Fatherland* to your actors on the day you shoot or whenever; they have to know it, above, below, and within.

On *Country* we rehearsed the text for eight days before shooting and rehearsed most scenes several times on the set before turning over.

All this you appear to reject, in favour of your own habituated process as a director, which you thereby implicitly prioritise over mine as a writer. Acting is for you a word of contempt, a basically false process, dead, unreal, unlife-like ... For you, spontaneity, living in the moment, catching what happens in actual time among non-performing people briefed with a structure and a sense of who they are, constitute collectively the real stuff of drama.

My sense of how things are acknowledges a plurality of approaches; yours only yours, it seems.

Trevor

Extracts of a response, dated,
1 February 1985

Thanks for the letter, which I found surprising.

I'm sorry you don't know how I intend to direct the film. I thought I had made it plain but I'll try again. I shall try to find people in the film who are most appropriate to the parts. They will, certainly, be mainly actors. In *Days of Hope* (Loach, BBC, 1975) the main cast were almost exclusively actors ... My concern is first of all that what ends up in front of the camera ... is as near as we can get to a genuine first-hand experience. The means of trying to achieve this are many and varied ... First of all, who is in the cast ... Secondly, what they have to do.

Also, and I feel I must say this, dialogue is not sacred. Dialogue, it seems to me, is part of behaviour, and not something onto which behaviour is added. This does not imply lack of respect for the script, the opposite is the case.

In short, far from putting my way of working above yours, I am prepared to use almost all methods ... acting for me is not 'a word of contempt'. I've worked with actors for twenty-five years. I've also worked with performers who were able to 'act' as well as those actors who had extensive theatrical experience. All the generalizations [about my work] are wrong.

Ken

Three: reflections on observing a casting session in Glasgow, spring 2011

Loach poses a number of questions to the thirty or so young women he interviews. None are about drama school or previous acting experience. Three questions recur regularly.

Where do you live?

Are you working at the minute?

What do you think about your boss?

The answers geographically situate the respondent, establish their class position, and their attitude to it. The approach employed here is perhaps connected to Loach's desire to cast people who he believes are similar to the characters in the films he directs. This may be casting established actors who he thinks would fight in the Spanish Civil War, Rosana Pastor in *Tierra y Libertad/Land and Freedom* (Loach, 1996), or, as in *The Angels' Share*, casting an auctioneer to play an auctioneer, a whisky expert to play a whisky expert or a young man from the East End of Glasgow with a violent past to play a young man from the East End of Glasgow with a violent past.

There is something in Loach's approach to casting here which is part Brecht, part Stanislavsky. A desire to draw on both private experience and socio-political experience as actors are cast in roles to play 'Versions of themselves' (a phrase employed by the experimental performance company Forced Entertainment), which, while not attempting to recreate a situation whereby actors attempt to 'live the part', nevertheless blurs the distinction between actor and character.

Loach's casting method is geared towards creating performances that he describes as 'authentic', 'honest' and 'true'. These terms have been widely rejected by academics writing on acting; yet, they have been widely used by filmmakers, from Brecht to Tarkovsky to Loach. Perhaps we need to do some more thinking about their performative function.

Ken Loach, Stunt Coordinator, Paul Heasman, and a group of actors discuss the use of weapons on the set of *The Angels' Share*. Image from author's private collection.



Four: Some observations from the set of *The Angels' Share*, spring 2011

It is well established that Loach shoots in a linear fashion and keeps the script largely secret from the actors, normally releasing sections to the actors on the day before each particular scene is to be shot. The importance of this is emphasised in the daily call sheets to the crew, which come with the following message, in bold type and block capitals for emphasis:

**PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE CALL SHEETS,
SCHEDULES OR SCRIPTS ANYWHERE
THE CAST MIGHT SEE THEM, THANKS.**

While in popular film criticism Loach is often coupled with Mike Leigh, and their work discussed in terms of improvisation, there is little room for movement in terms of where the story is likely to go. When the actors are given their lines, however, they are often advised to 'put it in your own words' or to say 'what you'd say in that situation', thereby further blurring the distinction between actor and character. Although the script is clearly the writer's work, some of the specific words that appear in the film arise from an on-set collaborative process.

The importance attached to performance ensures that, where possible, anything deemed to interfere with it is removed or concealed as much as is possible. While many film sets are replete with monitors and technological paraphernalia, a Loach set is pared down. The camera, predominantly a solitary one, is almost always positioned on a tripod and at eye-level and placed as far as is practical from the actors with long lenses used to shoot the action. On more than a few occasions the action is shot through a door or aperture from an adjoining room. There are no calls for 'action', no clapperboard at the start of the filming of each scene, actors are almost never expected to hit specific marks, but given the space to move freely with the camera expected to follow their action, the sound department is hidden from the actors' vision, and film lights, which are used sparingly, are not placed at eye-level. When filming interiors, the actors are often situated at a window, thereby utilising

natural light, or positioned to allow the exterior light to be supplemented with film lights that are positioned outwith the actors' line of vision.

Noticeably, just as filming is about to commence, Loach asks crew members to 'tuck away'; those who are not needed at that specific moment, perhaps the props staff, make up and costume staff etc., secrete themselves out of sight. Those whose presence is essential – mainly Loach, the cinematographer and focus-puller, continuity coordinator, boom operator, First AD, and on occasion the producer and writer – are required to hide their eyes from the line of the actors' vision. Even Loach himself tends not to look at the actors directly at the start of the scene, either casting his eyes downwards to the floor or upwards into the small monitor attached to the camera, although he does tend to look once the actors have become engaged in the action. As one crew member suggested to me, every scene is shot with the level of unobtrusiveness that many directors create only when shooting a sex scene.

This is all geared towards minimizing the presence of the cinematic apparatus on set, striving to make the performers feel more at ease, and works to create the celebrated performances with which Loach has become associated.

THE ANGELS' SHARE

Callsheet Number: 04

Monday 25th April 2011

Sixteen Scotland Limited. Production Office: 5th Floor, Trongate 103, Glasgow 5HD. Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

Director: Ken Loach. Producer: Rebecca O'Brien. Writer: Paul Laverty

Locations: Robbie [REDACTED] Line Producer: Peter [REDACTED] 2nd AD: Michael [REDACTED] Unit phone: Stephen [REDACTED]

Location: 1. Glasgow Sheriff Court, 1 Carlton Place, Glasgow G5 9DA

Base: 1. Glasgow Sheriff Court, 1 Carlton Place, Glasgow G5 9DA

Sunrise/Sunset: 0549/2041

Weather: Showery morning, dry, sunny afternoon. Max 13C

Crew Call: 0800

Breakfast from 0700 - 0900

Lunch: 1300 - 1400

EARLY CALL LX: 0600

EARLY CALL CAMERA: 0730

PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE CALLSHEETS, SCHEDULES OR SCRIPTS ANYWHERE THE CAST MIGHT SEE THEM. THANKS.

Loc.	Sc. No	Set/ Description	D/N	Pages	Cast	
1	2	INT. COURT	D1	4 7/8	1,2,3,4,6,7,10,13,14,29,35,41,47,50,51,52,59	
1	4	EXT. COURT	D1	1	1,2,3,4,6,7,10,13,14,29,35,41,47,50,51,52,59	
Page total				5 7/8		
Id. No	Cast	Character	P/up	M/Up	Costume	On Set
29	Nick Farr	Tongs Ted's Defence Lawyer 1	0700	From 0715		0800
35	Stewart Preston	Sheriff	0700	From 0715		0800
41	Vincent Friell	Fiscal	0700	From 0715		0800
47	Eric Robertson	Sheriff Clerk	0700	From 0715		0800
50	Charles Jamieson	Matthew's Defence Lawyer	0640	From 0715		0800
51	Kirstin Murray	Robbie's Defence Lawyer	0700	From 0715		0800
59	Ted Davitt	Tongs Ted	O/T	From 0715		0800
2	Jasmin Riggins	Mo	0700	From 0715		0830
3	William Ruane	Rhino	0650	From 0715		0830
4	Gary Maitland	Albert	0650	From 0715		0830
7	Elizabeth McGovern	Susan	0640	From 0715		0830
13	Lorne MacFadyen	Matthew	0700	From 0715		0830
1	Paul Brannigan	Robbie	0705	From 0745		0900
6	Siobhan Reilly	Leonie	0700	From 0745		0900
10	Neil Leiper	Sniper	0700	From 0745		0900
14	Scott Kyle	Clancy	O/T	From 0745		0900
52	Lee Fanning	Sniper's pal	0715	From 0745		0900
Sc. No	Others	P/up	M/Up	Costume	Rehearse	On Set
2	2 x COURT OFFICERS (real) - Mandy Davies	O/T	From 0730			0815
2	1 x CLERK'S ASSISTANT (real) - Natalie Ducie	O/T	From 0730			0815
2	3 x Reliance Security (real) - David, Ian, Margaret	O/T	From 0730			0815
2	2 x Lawyers (real) - Jim, Erica	O/T	From 0730			0815
2	2 x Lawyers (Kirsty, Mark.)	O/T	From 0730			0830
2	2 x Policemen (Brian, Derek)	O/T	From 0730			0830
2	1 x Agency press (David Archibald)	O/T	From 0730			0830
2	3 x FEATURED ACCUSED (Jack, James, Thomas)	O/T	From 0830			0900
2	6 x other accused	O/T	From 0830			0900
2	7 x Public gallery	O/T	From 0830			0900
2	13 x remaining public gallery	0830	From 0900			0930
4	2 x Different policemen	O/T	From 1530			1600
4	11 x different visitors etc.	O/T	From 1530			1600
4	2 x different lawyers	O/T	From 1530			1600

ART DEPT / PROPS: As per script and Fergus Clegg's instructions. To include: A small forest worth of files, papers, reports and other legal paraphernalia.

CAMERA: As per Robbie Ryan's instructions. 2nd camera and crew. Operator Alastair Rae, clapper loader Grant McPhee. Early call LX: 0730

ELECTRICAL: As per Andy Cole's instructions. Early call LX: 0600

SOUND: As per Ray Beckett's instructions.

ADVISERS: Drew Crombie (Acting head of estates and administration, Sheriff Court) and Jim Clarke, criminal lawyer on set as advisers. On set: 0800 Jim also playing a background lawyer. Practical DVD player c/o Sheriff Court.

PRODUCTION: DVD of Rhino and Albert flashbacks on set for 0800. DVD apparatus c/o Sheriff Court.

STILLS: As per Joss Barratt's instructions.

MAKE UP: As per Karen Brotherston's instructions.

COSTUME: As per Carole Fraser's instructions. 'Bump' padding for Leonie.

LOCATIONS: As per Michael Higson's instructions.

Five: Reflections on some academic literature on acting, summer 2017.

Recently I've been reading some of the academic writing on film and theatre acting, including Phillip B. Zarrilli's edited collection *Acting (Re)Considered*, James Naremore's *Acting in the Cinema*, Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke's *Reframing Screen Performance*. In the literature there is a clear desire on the part of some academics to reject the notion that film acting is created primarily in the cutting room and to celebrate the performance skills of screen actors. While I found this position to have considerable merit, I was struck by this quote from Baron and Carnicke:

the unique demands of film production do not make training unnecessary but instead require actors to rely on training, experience, and more independent preparation than that required for stage performances. Compressed rehearsal time requires players to come to the set or location fully prepared, with a good understanding of their characters and a readiness to adjust that understanding to the director's vision as needed. Performers in leading roles must have their characters' physical and emotional journeys mapped out, so that even when scenes are shot out of sequence, they know how each scene fits into the story and their characters' development. Often required to portray moments of extreme emotion without rehearsal or without the presence of their screen partners, screen actors depend on the work they have done alone and in advance. They must also develop their ability to maintain concentration because the production process itself presents constant distractions. While stage acting requires physical awareness, acting in the cinema necessitates even greater awareness: movements must fit framing choices, and gestures must be modified to accommodate their magnification when projected. Because performance details are combined with a dense array of filmic elements, actors learn to home in on the essentials so that the audiences can locate the meaningful qualities in movement, gestures, and

expressions. From the standpoint of actors, stage work and screen work involve differences in degree rather than kind. This insight implicitly informs the book's respect for actors' craft and their potential to contribute to films. (236)

As should be evident by the briefest of outlines presented here, this is almost the exact opposite of everything that actors are required to do in a film directed by Ken Loach. It signals the benefits of more detailed studies of the production process for Film Studies and Film Criticism, in which the study of work beyond the frame might impact our analysis of what is in it. More detailed on-set analyses should allow knowledge of the specific to prevent or at least curtail what could be construed as misleading statements about the general.

Six:
On watching a scene from
***The Angels' Share* and thinking**
about acting, summer 2017.

There is a scene in which one of the characters, the mother of a young man that the main character Robbie has badly beaten, confronts him. It's an extremely raw moment in the film; the woman delivers her lines with passion but also with an intensity that stands out somewhat. It seems too intense; certainly more intense than that which surrounds it. It takes the viewer (by which I mean me) out of the fictional narrative like a reverse Brechtian moment: not a v-effect which highlights the film's artifice, but a moment which highlights that the fiction of the film is grounded, at least in part, in real experiences. It is, rather weirdly, a social realism or naturalism that calls attention to itself.

Seven:
reflections on cinema's capacity
to encourage people to act,
summer 2017.

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt suggests that, 'To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, "to begin," "to lead," and eventually "to rule," indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*). (1958, 177). For over five decades Loach has been concerned with creating work which stimulates political action. At the 2017 May Day rally in Glasgow, which was addressed by Loach's long-term writer, Paul Laverty, members of the crowd held up posters on which was written the title of the film, *I, Daniel Blake* (Loach, 2016). It is perhaps Loach's most successful work in terms of influencing political discourse since *Cathy Come Home* in 1966. Yet, there remains a general sniffiness with which Loach's work is met by a number of film academics and critics, mostly in Britain, less so elsewhere, and mostly expressed through silence rather than open critique. I wonder if we were to factor in the films' use-value, that is, their capacity to provoke political action beyond the frame, whether Loach's films might be viewed somewhat differently.

***DRINK DEEP,
THIS IS YER
DEOCH AN
DORUS.***



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